

September 19, 2014

FEDERAL TRAVEL REGULATION  
GSA Bulletin FTR 14-09

TO: Heads of Federal Agencies

SUBJECT: Increasing Agency Cost Savings through Optimal Use of the Government Contractor-Issued Travel Charge Card

1. What is the purpose of this bulletin? This bulletin emphasizes the need for agencies to maximize travel cost savings through the use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card ("travel charge card" or "card"). It also discusses agency discretion to issue travel charge cards to employees who travel 5 times or less a year.
2. What is the background of this bulletin? Based on Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 data, agencies could benefit from an estimated \$4 million in additional refunds annually through better travel charge card utilization. Less than \$7 billion of the nearly \$12 billion of travel spend was transacted on the travel charge card. That leaves approximately \$5 billion, or over 40% of the total spend on travel, that is not being transacted via travel charge cards. This is due in part, to situations where an authorized exemption to travel charge card use applies, but use of the card is still possible, or the traveler does not use the travel charge card. Under the terms of the GSA SmartPay contracts, agencies earn additional refunds simply by ensuring travel charge card use is maximized.
3. What should agencies do as a result of this bulletin?
  - a) Agencies should review their internal travel charge card issuance policy and consider whether, in the agency's discretion, a travel charge card should be issued to all employees authorized to perform official travel. Although the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) §301-51.2(m) states that employees who travel five times or less a year are exempt from mandatory use of the travel charge card, agencies have the discretion to issue a travel charge card to every employee prior to official travel.
  - b) Because FTR §§301-51.1 and 301-51.6 require the use of the travel charge card for all official travel expenses unless the employee has an exemption, agencies should emphasize compliance if they believe some employees may not be fully aware of the regulatory requirements. Expenses without exemptions include, but are not limited to, airline tickets, hotel lodging, car rentals, and meals associated with official travel, when vendors accept the card.
  - c) Agencies should manage their travel charge card programs to alleviate risks associated with issuing a travel charge card, where appropriate. For example, administrative options are available to reduce the travel charge card spend value available on a card to \$1.00. Whenever an employee has a need to travel, the

spend value of the card can be increased to cover the estimated expenses for the trip. After the employee's travel is complete, the travel charge card available spend value can then be reduced to \$1.00 until the next trip for which travel is authorized.

- d) Agencies should include information in their travel charge cardholder training to inform travelers of the statutory requirement to use the travel charge card and the benefits to the agency of its use, including earning refunds that the agency can reinvest in mission delivery. Better data gained from increased travel charge card use will allow GSA to identify more readily the locations to which employees are traveling, information that can then be used in conducting lodging per diem rate studies. GSA will include similar travel charge card benefit information on its on-line travel charge cardholder and Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) training available at [smartpay.gsa.gov](http://smartpay.gsa.gov).

4. Whom should I call for further information? For clarification of content, please contact Mr. Cy Greenidge, Office of Government-wide Policy, Office of Asset and Transportation Management (MA), at (202) 219-2349 or via e-mail at [travelpolicy@gsa.gov](mailto:travelpolicy@gsa.gov).



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